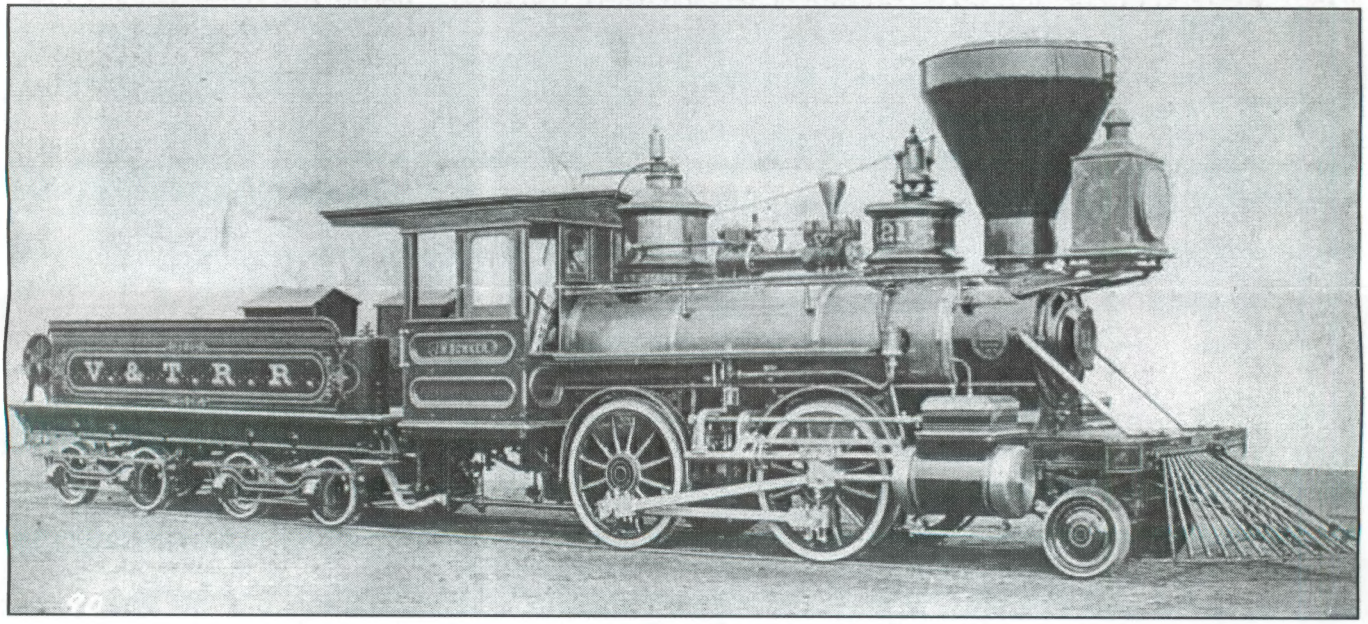
WESTERN RAILROADER

A Publication of the Pacific Coast Chapter, Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, Inc.
FOUNDERS OF THE CALIFORNIA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM
-&-
THE SAN FRANCISCO CABLE CAR MUSEUM

January / February 2008 Number 681

Happy New Year



February 1875 Baldwin Locomotive Works builder's portrait of Virginia & Truckee No. 21. The photo was reproduced in several Baldwin catalogues to help sell additional standard gauge 2-4-0s of this size. Note the steam driven water-pump between the domes (see text of story inside). The locomotive was saved by the PCC and is now a prominent part of the equipment displayed at the California State Railroad Museum.

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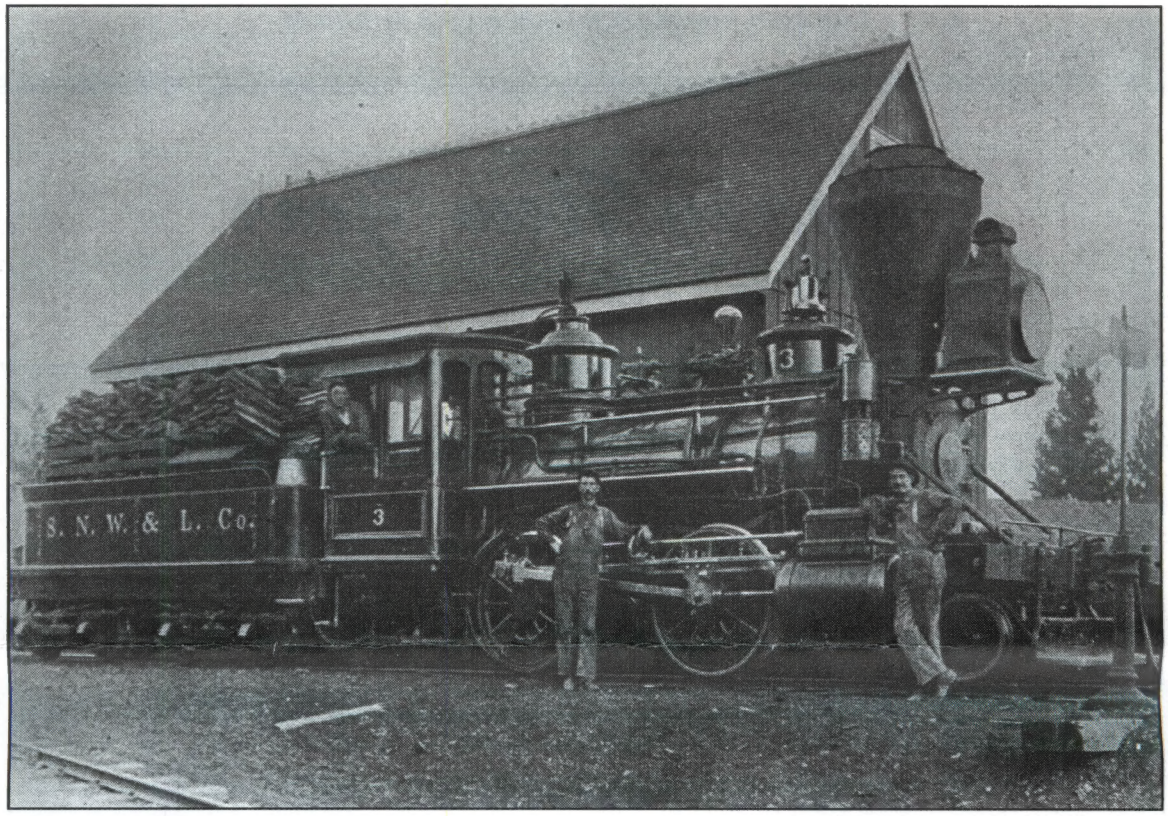
The Virginia & Truckee *J. W. Bowker*

By Stephen E. Drew



The V&T J. W. Bowker as Sierra Nevada Wood & Lumber Company No. 3.del Oro.

It was exactly 71 years ago this year that Gilbert H. Kneiss secured the commitment for the donation of the historic 1875 Baldwin Virginia & Truckee steam locomotive No. 21 to the new Pacific Coast Chapter of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society. The *J. W. Bowker* would be the first in a collection of more than three dozen steam locomotives and cars to be acquired by the Pacific Coast Chapter. Upon the presentation of the locomotive in 1969 to the State of California, the locomotive symbolically became the first of actually 30 locomotives and cars donated by the Chapter for preservation at the new California State Railroad Museum in Old Sacramento. The 71st anniversary of this acquisition is an appropriate opportunity to revisit the Chapter's acquisition of what is now North America's oldest surviving Baldwin standard gauge 2-4-0 — the 1875 V&T *J. W. Bowker*.

Chronicling the first 12-1/2 years of the Pacific Coast Chapter in Issue No. 270 of **The Western Railroader**, Gilbert Kneiss wrote:

Prior to the formation of the Chapter, I, as Pacific Coast Representative, had secured donation of the Virginia & Truckee locomotive *J. W. Bowker* from the Hobart Estate Company, Truckee, Calif., and the narrow gauge coach *Silver State* from the Nevada Central railroad in Nevada. The Southern Pacific agreed to furnish free transportation to Oakland for both pieces of equipment.

I had learned of the *Bowker's* whereabouts through a railroad history exhibit in the Leamington Hotel early in 1937. The group running the show had asked to borrow the headlight for the occasion and had been turned

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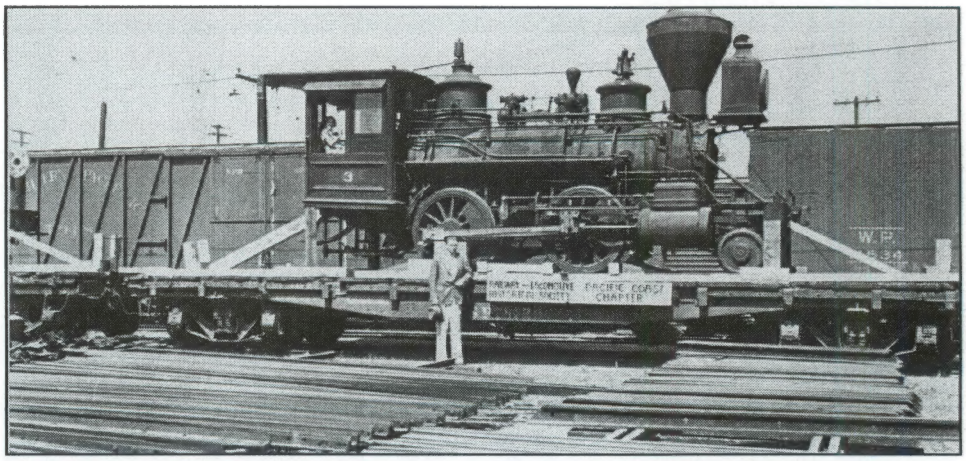
down in a letter which was on display. At the time it seemed that asking for the whole locomotive as a gift might be more successful than trying to borrow the headlight, and sure enough it was!

The *J. W. Bowker* arrived in Oakland, California, September 10, 1937, and was unloaded and stored for the Society in the Key System West Yerba Buena yard. Permission was obtained for members of the Chapter to work on the restoration of the engine to its original appearance at every opportunity. When the rainy season started the Key System kindly moved the engine inside the old power house so we could continue the job. By the use of gallons of paint remover the old color scheme and gold leaf filigree came to light. Paint was donated by W. P. Fuller and soon the *Bowker* looked as good as new.

With the *J. W. Bowker* as the central attraction, the Chapter put on a railroad show in the vacant Western Pacific waiting room in the Ferry Building from January 10 thru 28, 1938. The State Belt Line Railroad and the Market Street Railway of San Francisco pooled their equipment to place the *Bowker* on a temporary piece of track outside the Ferry Building. The waiting room was filled with a display of historical photos, headlights, link and pin couplers, passes and other railroad memorabilia. Some 10,000 visitors went through the exhibit in addition to thousands who inspected the restored *Bowker*. The latter was such a hit that *Sunset Magazine*, a leading magazine of the west, used it for its first color photo cover along with a wonderful write up of the Chapter's activities.



Gilbert and Emily Kneiss pose with SNW&L Co. No. 3 upon its September 1937 arrival in Oakland.

It is interesting to note that the 1937 railroad exhibit that brought the *J. W. Bowker* to the attention of Gil Kneiss was hosted by the competing California-Nevada Railroad Historical Society headed by Grahame H. Hardy as President. A delightful account about loading the *Bowker* at Hobart Mills and how it almost dropped through the wood deck of its Southern Pacific flat car is contained in Chapter XXII of artist A. Sheldon Pennoyer's 1954 book **Locomotives in Our Lives: Railroad Experiences of Three Brothers for More Than Sixty Years, 1890-1951**. Pennoyer credits longtime SP Sacramento photographer David L. Joslyn with "discovering" the *Bowker* in a dark corner of the Hobart Mills roundhouse in July of 1915.

1875 - 1937

Late in 1874, the Virginia & Truckee Railroad was operating 18 steam locomotives over their 52-mile mainline connecting Reno, Carson City, and Virginia City, Nevada. But the burgeoning 5-1/2 year old short line was still in need of additional motive power. On December 19th, 1874, Burnham, Parry, Williams & Company—the Baldwin Locomotive Works of Philadelphia—entered the V&T's order for a new Virginia City switch engine. The locomotive would be Baldwin class 6 22 C No. 1—the first of a new class of Baldwin 2-4-0s.

The switch engine was outshopped by Baldwin in February 1875 at a cost to the V&T of $9,383.37. As the first of a new series of Baldwin 6 22 C locomotives, the 2-4-0 was the only one of the V&T's 19 Baldwin locomotives to be photographed "as-built" at the Baldwin Works. The photograph indicates the high level of ornamentation, striping, and coloring which Baldwin proudly lavished on their new steam locomotives. The photograph was included in subsequent Baldwin promotional catalogues and it undoubtedly helped sell orders for several similar class 6 22 C's from 1875 until as late as 1904.

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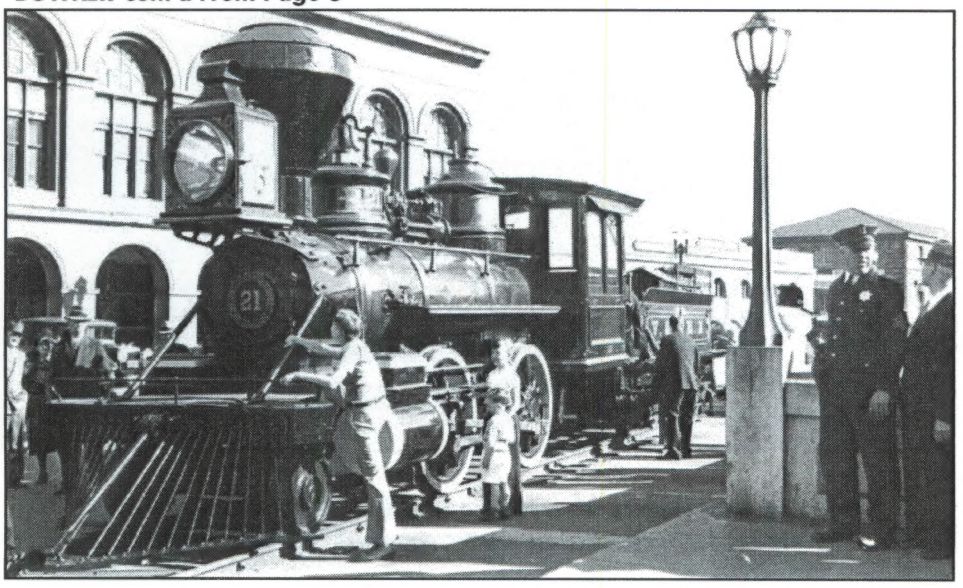

Returned once again to its V&T livery by enthusiastic Chapter members, No. 21, on display out in front of the Ferry Building in San Francisco, was a crowd drawing popular exhibit in January 1938.

The basic specifications of the *Bowker* were 48-1/4 inch diameter drivers and two 14 x 22-inch cylinders. Gross weights were 40,000 lbs. on drivers, an engine weight of 48,000 lbs., and a combined engine and tender weight of 65,000 lbs. With a working boiler pressure of 130 lbs., the wood-burning switch engine had a rated tractive force of 9,970 lbs. V&T No. 21 bore Baldwin construction number 3689 and was highly ornamented with brightly-polished metal surfaces and multi-colored striping.

Following the practice of the V&T's Carson City 2-4-0 switch engine No. 9 which was ceremoniously named *I. E. James* after the railroad's chief engineer, No. 21 received the name *J. W. Bowker* in honor of the line's revered master mechanic John William Bowker. The name was applied on cast brass plates on both sides of the engine cab. Bowker was an innovative master mechanic and inventor who oversaw construction of the V&T's massive Carson City shops and the ordering, building, or rebuilding of scores of cars and locomotives. Unfortunately, the honor of naming the locomotive after the gentleman must have gone to his head and V&T General Superintendent Henry M. Yerington had to discharge him for drunken conduct on the job less than four months after the engine's arrival. The engine was briefly named *Mexico* when Bowker left to become chief engineer on a steamer plying between San Francisco and China.

Sparks from wood-burning smokestacks were a recurring source of fires on the V&T. Shortly after the *I. E. James* caused more than $5,000 damage in the Carson River wood yard of the Mexican Mill in May 1873, the 2-4-0 was fitted with a powerful Krombig boiler-mounted steam water pump for firefighting purposes. Water could be drawn directly from the tender cistern or via suction hoses from a nearby lake, river or stream. The *J. W. Bowker* was outfitted by Baldwin with a powerful Knowles steam water pump atop its boiler. An iron reel mounted on the rear of the tender held 500 feet of hose for fire-fighting purposes. Fighting small shanty fires adjacent to the railroad's mainline, the force of the V&T's switch engine pumps were known to entirely knock over a flaming structure! Amazingly, this 1862-patent pump is still atop the *J. W. Bowker* today.

An engineer like H. M. Freeman who worked seven days a week on the *Mexico* late in 1878 earned $4.50 per day—50 cents per day less than a V&T freight or passenger train engineer operating out on the V&T mainline. By mid 1879, use of the name *J. W. Bowker* re-emerged in lieu of *Mexico*—the reasons for which we can only make a nostalgic guess. Occasionally the yard engine handled switching assignments between Virginia and Carson City. The early 1890s depression years were a quiet time on the Nevada short line and No. 21 was replaced by the namesake V&T 2-6-0 No. 4 *Virginia* as the Virginia City switch engine. Out of service, the fabled V&T 2-4-0 was sold in July 1896 to the Sierra Nevada Wood & Lumber Company at Hobart Mills, California, for $4,000. The engine was re-lettered S. N. W. & L. Co. No. 3 before leaving the Carson City shops. The V&T's remaining

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Financed by Paramount Pictures for use in the movie Union Pacific, No. 21 was returned to operation in 1938 by SP's West Oakland Shops. Frederic C. Shaw captured this first test operation of the wood-burner in September of 1938. Yes, that's 126 lbs. of working boiler pressure on the backhead steam gauge.

13 steam locomotives were more than adequate to handle the diminishing freight and passenger traffic of the late 1890s.

At Sierra Nevada Wood & Lumber, No. 3 began a new career switching lumber over the eight miles between Hobart Mills and the Southern Pacific mainline at Truckee. A homemade wooden snow plow was attached to the front pilot during winter months. It is interesting to note that the V&T's 4-4-0 No. 12 *Genoa*—later also acquired by the R&LHS Pacific Coast Chapter—was rented to the SNW&L Co. for $15 per day while the *Bowker* was in the V&T Carson City Shops for repairs in August and September of 1900. The Hobart Mills Company continued to order replacement parts from the V&T for No. 21 for more than 10 years. For decades, the massive Carson City shops would supply railroads, mine, and milling operations throughout Nevada, Eastern California, and even Mexico. By this time the 2-4-0 had a replacement stand-up wood cab, new Baldwin cylinder pistons, and air brakes.

Soon replaced by newer and larger SNW&L locomotives, No. 3 was relegated to a dark corner of the Hobart Mills roundhouse for the next 20+ years. The Hobart Estate Company became the corporate successor to SNW&L in 1917 and the Hobart Estate's railroad assets became known as the Hobart Southern Railroad Company beginning in 1932. Fortunately, the Hobart Family and history-minded Hobart Estate Company president George D. Oliver were loath to throw anything away. It was George Oliver in mid 1937 who agreed to donate the fabled wood-burner for preservation by the new Pacific Coast Chapter of the R&LHS.

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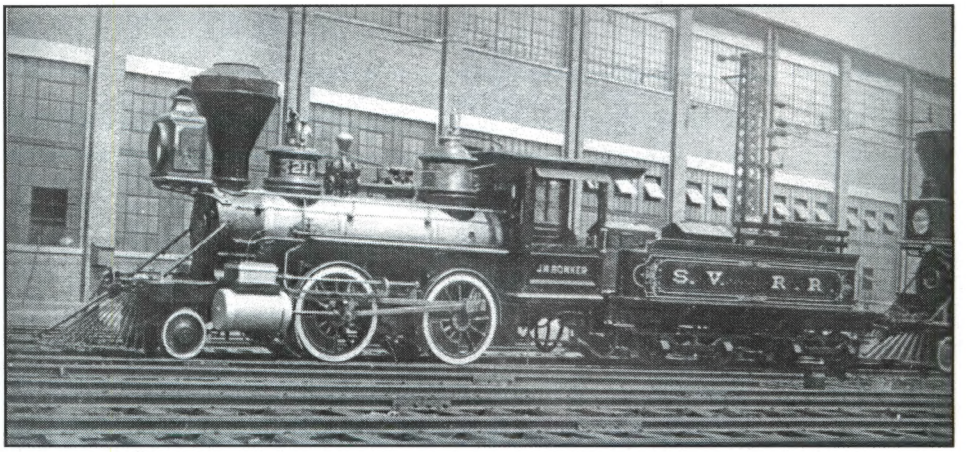
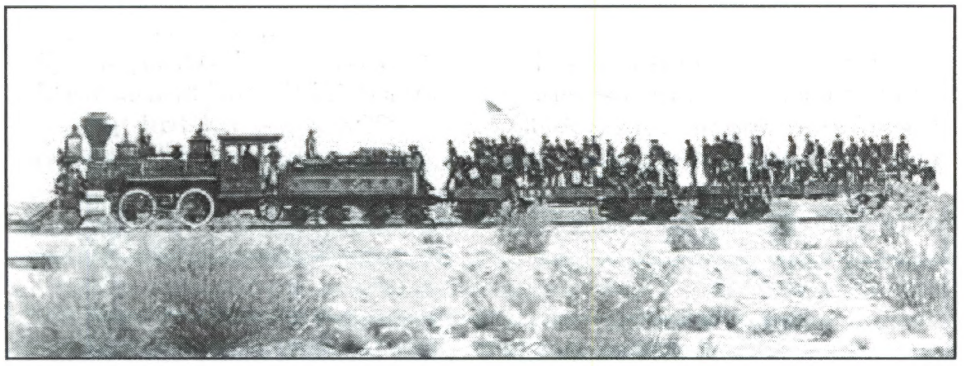
1937 - 1969

The *Bowker* engine and tender were loaded September 8th, 1937 on two Southern Pacific flat cars. Gil Kneiss accompanied the locomotive on the 38-hour trip from Hobart Mills to SP's Oakland yards. David L. Joslyn designed an old-timey iron rod pilot which was fabricated and donated by the Michel & Pfeffer Iron Works of San Francisco. Years of dirt and grime were removed by Chapter members as the *J. W. Bowker* was once again returned to an appropriate V&T appearance. After display outside the San Francisco Ferry Building in January 1938, the *Bowker* was one of the first artifacts on San Francisco's Treasure Island to briefly promote the 1939-40 Golden Gate International Exposition.



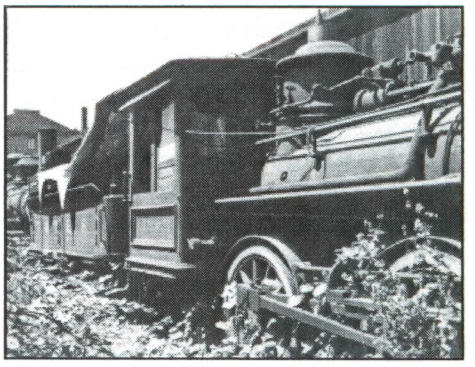
A David L. Joslyn view of the J. W. Bowker lettered as Sacramento Valley No. 21 for an early Sacramento vignette at the second season of Edward Hungerford's pageant "Railroads on Parade" at the 1939-40 New York World's Fair.

In early 1938, film director Cecil B. DeMille had the property department of Paramount Pictures out gathering several dozen nineteenth century locomotives and cars for what would arguably become one of the greatest epic railroad motion pictures of all time—**Union Pacific**, starring Barbara Stanwyck, Joel McCrea, Robert Preston, and Anthony Quinn. Paramount already owned the V&T 4-4-0 No. 22 *Inyo*, they purchased the *Dayton* in 1938, and made arrangements to rent the No. 11 *Reno*. In exchange for having the *J. W. Bowker* returned to operating condition at SP's West Oakland roundhouse, the Chapter agreed to make the *Bowker* available for filming lettered as the UP No. 21



No. 21 was relettered as the Union Pacific's Genl McPherson for this filming in December 1938 on SP's Mojave-Owenyo Branch for Paramount's epic motion picture Union Pacific. Railroaders called this desert line that connected to SP's narrow gauge Keeler-Laws line, the "The Jawbone" as a Saber-tooth Tiger's jawbone was unearthed during construction of the Los Angeles Aqueduct near trackage at Cantril. (pictured above)

No. 21 escaped World War II scrap drives by being hid with other Chapter equipment behind high wood fences located on property of the Pacific Guano Works in Berkeley. (pictured below)



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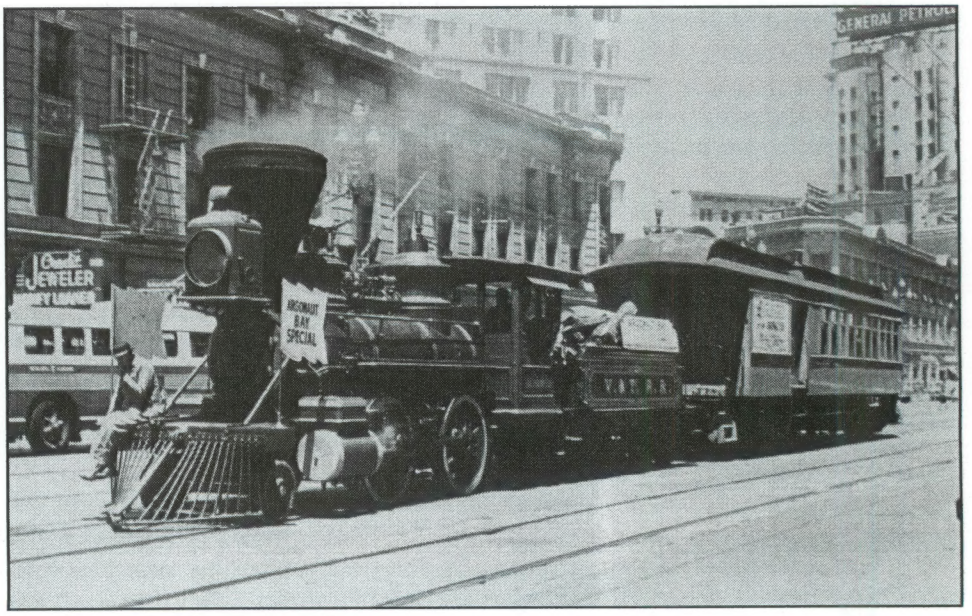
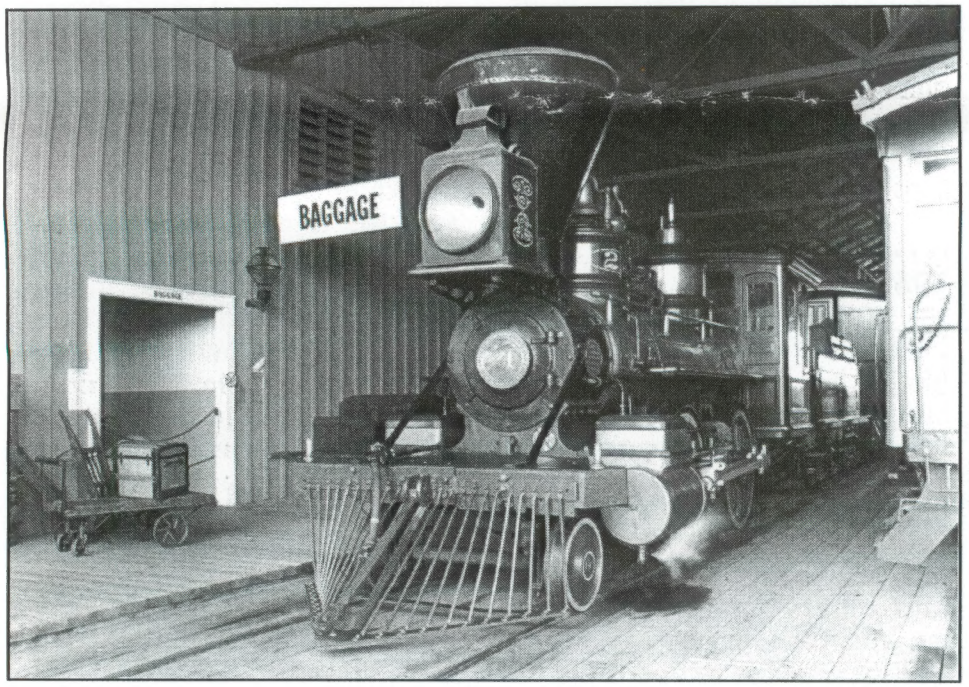
The J. W. Bowker last operated under steam on June 23, 1952, for Argonaut Bay Days, where it moved on Municipal Railways trackage on Market Street, San Francisco. The car providing accommodations for passengers is an 1888 Pullman combine built for the D&RG as No. 550. It became WP No. 402 in 1925. It was donated to the Chapter in January 1952 and is now at the California State Railroad Museum.





The J. W. Bowker has continued on daily public exhibit at the California State Railroad Museum since the Museum's reconstructed Central Pacific Railroad Passenger Station opened in July 1976. The historic 2-4-0 occasionally departs for off-site exhibit and commercial filming—continuing a tradition begun nearly 70 years ago with Cecil B. De Mille's Union Pacific.

Genl McPherson. Following test runs in the Bay Area, the 2-4-0 was filmed under steam in December 1938 on SP's Mojave Branch and in early 1939 at Canoga Park for DeMille's **Union Pacific**. No. 21 quickly became one of the oldest and most widely recognizable operable steam locomotives in the West.

To promote Edward Hungerford's grand pageant "Railroads on Parade" for the 1939-40 New York World's Fair, the *Bowker* operated a 16-mile publicity excursion on the New York Central's Putnam Division pulling three Baltimore & Ohio wooden coaches. On board were railroad authors Gilbert Kneiss, A. Sheldon Pennoyer, Lucius

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Beebe, and Charles M. Clegg, Jr. For the first season of the fair, No. 21 pulled a pay car in the finale. In the second year, No. 21 was lettered as Sacramento Valley No. 21 for an early Sacramento scene. Returning West, No. 21 operated in March 1941 at the dedication of SP's new Palo Alto passenger station and nearby highway underpass.

For the next eight years, the *Bowker* was "sequestered" behind high wood fences on property of the Pacific Guano Works in Berkeley. During the WW II scrap drives, many thought the Chapter was unpatriotic for not making contributions—behind the fence were squirreled away treasures like the *Bowker*, the V&T *Empire*, the NPC *Sonoma*, the NSL No. 1, and two passenger cars. Thank goodness the Chapter was able to keep the collection intact! Known as the "West Berkeley Engine House," the stored equipment was being held for a possible railroad museum in San Francisco.

The *Bowker* was sent East again in May 1949 for static display at the great Chicago Railroad Fair. Afterwards, it operated at McAlester, Oklahoma, for the Republic Pictures motion picture **Rock Island Trail** released in May 1950. Parts of the same footage were also incorporated seven years later into Republic's **Last Stagecoach West**. No. 21 operated in June 1950 for the California Centennials Commission pageant at Redding, California, and in May 1951 on the San Francisco Embarcadero for the opening of the San Francisco Maritime Museum. The last operation of the historic locomotive occurred on June 23, 1953 when the wood-burning 2-4-0 was steamed up for a trip up San Francisco's Market Street, to promote a proposed expanded maritime and railroad museum in Aquatic Park. In May 1964, ownership of the engine was transferred from the parent R&LHS to the Pacific Coast Chapter. The locomotive received a new cab and was completely repainted by the Bethlehem Steel shipyard in San Francisco in early 1969 at a cost to the Chapter of $7,892.35. In early May 1969, the venerable engine was trucked to Sacramento. Effective August 10th, 1969, No. 21 was one of the first 12 pieces of equipment to be presented by the Chapter to the State of California, Department of Parks and Recreation, for the new California State Railroad Museum in Old Sacramento.

1969 - 2007

Except for brief guest appearances, No. 21 has been on public exhibit inside the reconstructed Central Pacific Railroad Passenger Station since the opening of CSRM's first phase in July 1976. The same year, CSRM's Ken Yeo, "U.P." Joe Passentino, Barry Garland and others surveyed No. 21, the V&T *Genoa*, and NWP No. 112 for possible re-operation for the Passenger Station's grand opening festivities in September 1976. The *Genoa* was identified with the best-condition boiler. The 1873 4-4-0 was operated at 50 lbs. pressure on several occasions from 1976 through 1979. In making an assessment of which pieces of nineteenth century would be restored for the 1981 opening of the new Railroad History Museum, Museum Staff deliberately "set aside" No. 21. If the Museum ever hoped to periodically operate a piece of nineteenth century equipment, No. 21 could be an excellent candidate for re-operation.

The *Bowker* has continued its credits as a well-traveled locomotive. It was trucked to San Francisco for a week in April 1987 for The Great San Francisco Railroad Fair. It was filmed simulated under steam on the Museum's Sacramento Southern excursion line for the Hallmark made-for-television movie **Spring Awakening** in September 1994. The engine has been displayed on two occasions in 1999 and again in 2005 on the reconstructed Sacramento Valley Rail Road turntable at Folsom, California. And the engine has made two trips to New Mexico for filming, in 1999 in the Warner Brothers motion picture **Wild Wild West** starring Will Smith and Kevin Kline and again in 2005 for the Ted Turner/Steven Spielberg TV mini-series **Into the West**.

The New Mexico trips provided resources for a careful repainting of the venerable "movie star." Several display appearances were considered—as the V&T *J. W. Bowker*, Sierra Nevada Wood & Lumber Company No. 3, or even as the V&T No. 21 *Mexico*. The decision was made to return the 2-4-0 to an appropriate late 1880s-early 1890s appearance as the V&T No. 21 *J. W. Bowker*. CSRM Curator of History & Technology

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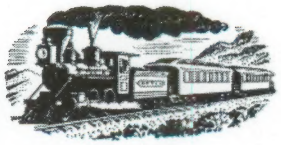

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Kyle Wyatt together with longtime V&T historian and CSRM Docent Mike Collins researched the paint scheme and lettering plan. Sacramento Regional Transit's paint shop was instrumental in making the painting happen and the repainted locomotive emerged late in 2005.

Today the *J. W. Bowker* continues to "do-its-job" on daily public display inside the Central Pacific Railroad Passenger Station. The 1875 product has statewide, regional, and even national significant as the oldest surviving standard gauge Baldwin 2-4-0 in the U.S. Built in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the *Bowker* has seen operation throughout Nevada and California, New York in 1939-40, Chicago in 1949, and two trips to New Mexico in 1994 and 1999. Possibly more people have seen V&T No. 21 on Hollywood's "silver screen" than have actually seen the historic engine in person. The piece that started the Pacific Coast Chapter's equipment collection remains ready to star in any future motion picture or television assignments. John William Bowker would never have guessed...

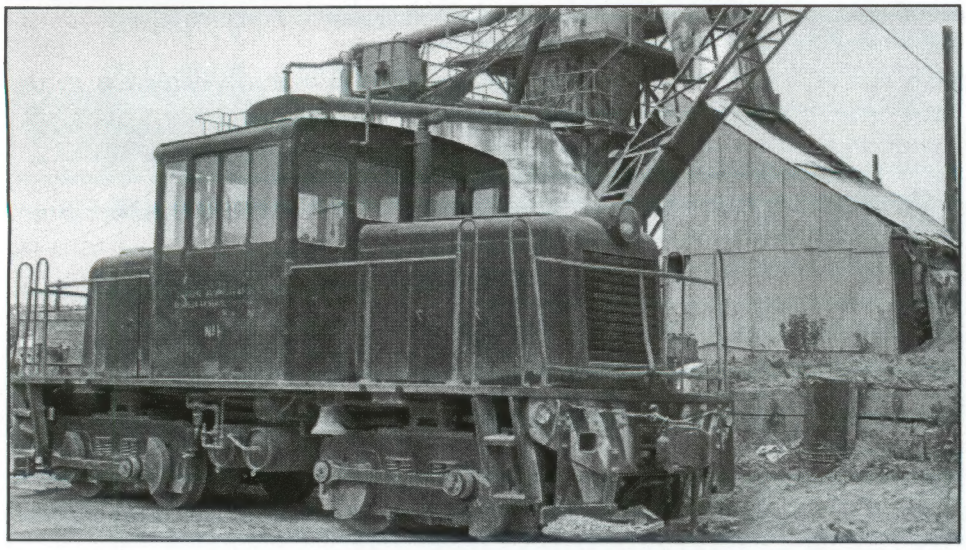
For further reading:

Virginia & Truckee Railroad Locomotive No. 21 *J. W. Bowker.* **Equipment Restoration Feasibility Investigation**, 1976. Compiled by Stephen E. Drew and William A. Oden. 44 pp. Typescript.

An Historical Overview: Virginia & Truckee Railroad Locomotive No. 21 *J. W. Bowker.* By Stephen E. Drew for the Twenty-second Annual Virginia & Truckee Symposium, Carson City, Nevada, October 1992. 25 pp. Typescript.

(Stephen Drew has been a student of V&T history for more than 40 years. He joined the R&LHS in 1968 and the Pacific Coast Chapter shortly thereafter. He has been one of the Curators at the California State Railroad Museum since the first phase of the Museum opened in 1976.)

MYSTERY PHOTO



Carl Rodolf, the PCC Treasurer, is in the process of cataloging the photographs in Francis Guido's collection. He has run into a picture that he would like more information on. He states "The sleeve that the negative is found in identifies this photo as an Alameda Naval Air Station unit. Maybe it was in a younger life! The hills in the background will not be found in Alameda, and they are too close to be the Oakland Hills as seen from Alameda. Furthermore, the hills are sparsely forested, not like the Oakland hills. The marking on the cab is not very fresh, but appears to read: 'Maritime Administration, Alameda Reserve Shipyard, No. 1'. The unit appears to have been acquired by a local aggregate producer. The new owner has not painted or relettered the locomotive, and damage from minor accidents has not been repaired. No governmental agency would allow damage like that seen in the photo to remain not repaired for very long. Finally, note that there is an air whistle projecting out from the cab front wall; no sign of an air horn." Any information regarding the locomotive would be greatly appreciated. Please send your responses to the Editor, Irene Lugg, at email address bilugg@att.net or by snail mail to PO Box 292927, Sacramento, CA 95829-2927.

January / February 2008
Number 681

DONATIONS RECEIVED

The Board of Directors and Officers of the Pacific Coast Chapter wish to thank the following member(s) for their donation(s) to the organization.

Mr. Robert A. Blohm, Fort Bragg Ca
M/M Glen H. Blomgren, Fresno Ca
Dr. & Mrs. Robert J. Church, Wilton Ca
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NOTE FROM THE PCC MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Our past and current practice is to give our membership the opportunity to decide whether or not their addresses should be made available to other agencies. The Pacific Coast Chapter is diligently honoring the wishes of each member concerning this issue. This may not be the case at the National level at this time. As Membership Secretary for the Chapter, I will continue to inform the National Society of members' wishes regarding the use of their addresses.

Pacific Coast Chapter Needs

The Board of Directors cordially invites and encourages any member in good standing to participate in becoming a member of the Board or volunteer to assist in various projects. Board Members meet generally once a month in the Folsom History Museum in Folsom, California, starting time is 10:00 AM and meetings generally last approximately two hours. Discussions include the operation of the Chapter as well as planning for upcoming events and such other items as may come before the Board. Anyone interested in joining the Board or becoming a volunteer please contact Mr. Dennis Stefani by sending a letter to his home at 114 Coralie Way, Folsom CA 95630-3303 or email him at d.stefani@sbcglobal.net.

We Need Articles

Please consider a contribution to the PCC and your fellow members. If you have an interesting photograph or story, send it to the editor, Irene Lugg at P.O. Box 292927, Sacramento, CA 95829-2927 or via email at bilugg@att.net. Editor does not verify articles for factual or grammatical accuracy.

Membership Information

Membership in the Pacific Coast Chapter includes all National R&LHS publications, and the bi-monthly Western Railroader, which is available only to Pacific Coast Chapter members. Dues are $45 per calendar year. Checks, payable to PCC, R&LHS should be sent to Bill Lugg, Jr., P.O. Box 292927, Sacramento, CA 95829-2927. Editorial material should be sent to The Western Railroader, P.O. Box 292927, Sacramento, CA 95829-2927, or email at bilugg@att.net.

Attention Web Users

Be sure to check our website, www.mp1.com, from time to time.

We plan to update the Calendar of Events in the near future as well as showing more of our photos from the Chapter's archives.

You can email comments and questions about the website to pccrodolf@aol.com. Be sure to indicate mp1 website in the subject line.

The **FRED A. STINDT** collection of negatives has been catalogued. This collection includes locomotive portraits, primarily of Southern Pacific steam & diesel motive power, with some action shots. Prints Are now being offered for sale.

For more information please contact:
Pacific Coast Chapter, R&LHS Attention: Carl Rodolf
5810 Hemlock Street, Sacramento, CA 95841-2308
Fax: 916/344-4325, E-mail: crodolf@aol.com

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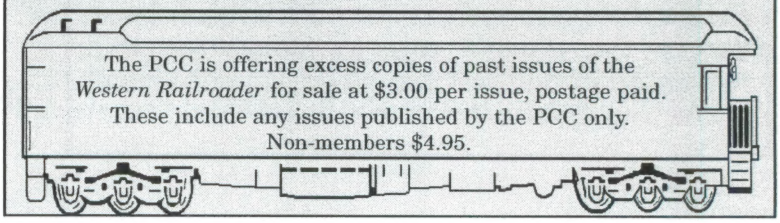

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FUTURE EVENTS

February 2, 2008 – Saturday, 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM PST – General Membership Annual Luncheon and Meeting at Spenger's Fish Grotto, 1919 Fourth Street, Berkeley, CA. – Guest speaker Mr. Steve Staiger, Palo Alto Historian, and his topic will be, Palo Alto Rapid Transit (The History of Palo Alto Street Cars).

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